



The LINK

for Child Care Professionals



Spring / Summer 2005

We're Listening to You

Over the last year, DCCEL has made improvements to several systems and procedures with the goal of serving child care providers better. These changes should make the rules more clear, licensing more consistent, and allow more of a voice for providers in how they are regulated as the division opens up ways to receive input from the provider community.

You asked that the regulations be clear. We undertook a rewrite of the Minimum Licensing Requirements for Family Homes last year. The rules were rewritten, with input from providers, in a question and answer format that made them easier to read and understand. We have been listening to your feedback since the rules were made effective last October. DCCEL staff will begin a revision of selected sections of the Family Home Washington Administrative Code (WAC) based on the suggestions we received from providers. Input from providers will again be requested as the revision process is begun and drafts will be posted online for comment.

You asked for licensors to interpret the rules the same way. DCCEL staff began reworking the Methods and Practices manual (MAP) for child care centers. This is the manual that guides center licensors in their regulation of child care facilities. By making this document more clear and by addressing issues that have been unclear to licensors, we will improve the consistency of licensing practices among licensors. The MAP for family child care homes will be completed after the pending WAC update.

DCCEL also opened a toll-free telephone number for licensed providers to call with licensing concerns and implemented a review system so that providers can appeal compliance agreements. See page 3 for more information on these initiatives.

Recently, DCCEL Licensing Policy Administrator Joel Roalkvam and Special Assistant for Provider Relations Roger Long have been attending provider meetings around the state. These meetings allowed DCCEL to update providers on initiatives, clarify policy decisions, and ask providers to talk about their experiences being regulated by DCCEL licensors.

"The meetings have been very productive," said Roalkvam. "We plan to continue these provider meetings in the months to come." Provider groups (either family home or center) interested in having Roalkvam and Long attend a meeting can call Roberta Morley at 360-725-4672 to schedule a meeting.

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Background Checks Now Processed at Local DCCEL Offices

DCCEL has developed a new computer application to speed up processing of criminal background checks for child care providers. The new application sends and receives requests electronically within the secure DSHS intranet, instead of relying on paper processes and slow mail systems.

All licensed providers should now send their criminal background checks directly to their local DCCEL Office. Any forms sent to the Central Unit will be re-routed to local DCCEL Offices. Thus, it will be faster to send the forms directly to your local DCCEL Office.

Steve Rowswell, from the DCCEL Data Analysis Unit, created this new computer application. Staff at the local DCCEL Offices can now enter information provided on the background check forms submitted by child care providers and send that information electronically to the DSHS Background Check Central Unit (BCCU). Results of the background checks are then returned electronically to the local DCCEL Offices.

"We hope the new process can be a big help to providers. Background

checks should get done much faster," said Data Analysis Administrator Laura Schrager. "And providers can call their local DCCEL Office to find out the status of a background check that they are waiting on."

The new system is the result of teamwork and cooperation between DCCEL and the Background Check Central Unit. Urbano Eijan, the programmer for the BCCU, worked very closely with DCCEL to create interfaces with their existing systems to support this new process. The new process may help streamline background checks for other agencies in DSHS as well.

"The pilot computer program has been tested in all of DCCEL's 15 offices since last year. Results of the testing were positive during the testing period and this should benefit the provider community," said Rowswell.

NOTE: If providers include their provider Control ID (found on the child care license) in box #2 of the background check form in addition to their facility name and address, it will help us process the background checks even faster.

Requesting a Supervisory Review

Child care providers can ask for a supervisory review of compliance agreements written by licensors. Although this practice has been around since last year, some providers have told us that they didn't know about it.

Providers can request a review of any disputed items on a compliance agreement at the time the licensor presents it to them. Licensors carry a new form with them that allows providers to list licensing issues to be reviewed by the licensing supervisor.

DCCEL Trainer and former Licensing Supervisor Susan Thomas has had positive experiences with the process.

"Having a supervisor review these compliance agreements is really an opportunity for both provider and DCCEL to clarify the reasons behind a particular requirement," said Thomas. "It gives a better understanding for both parties about the intent behind a rule."

The review process is another way for providers to understand the Minimum Licensing Requirements and get clarification on the rules.

"It also allows DCCEL to monitor the WAC requirements to see if there are revisions needed or if something needs to be written more clearly in order to promote a better understanding of the rules," Thomas said.

Change to Subsidy Payment of Field Trip Fees

Changes to the Activity Fee rule, WAC 388-290-0245, were made on May 28, 2004. New WAC 388-290-0247 now refers to the fee as a Field Trip Fee and includes a minimum eligibility age and allowable expenses. Please be aware you cannot bill DSHS to cover the cost of food for a field trip. Effective September 1, 2005 if the field trip fee is used to cover the cost of food it will be considered an overpayment. Please refer to the following two links for more information on what the field trip fee can be used for: <http://www.leg.wa.gov/WAC/index.cfm?section=388-290-0247&fuseaction=section> and <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/wccc/Sections/PymtsHregfees.htm>.

Update on Child Care Provider Toll-Free Line

NOTE: This article is a follow-up to the front-page article on the provider line that appeared in the Fall 2004/ Winter 2005 issue of The Link.

Hi. My name is Roger Long, and among other things, I work with child care providers who call the toll-free child care provider line. The number is 1-888-270-0614. Some of the calls I get are questions. The others are complaints.

I do my best to resolve all complaints. I will never “leave you hanging.” I cannot guarantee a 100% “rate of satisfaction” for all complaints. But I do my best to come to a workable solution for all concerned. Please remember that the toll-free provider line is for licensing complaints only.

I operate like a constituent relations office, although I go one step further. I call you back after you’ve had contact with the licensing office to find out how things went. I don’t supervise licensors or licensing supervisors. Therefore, I cannot “order” a licensor to do something. What I can do is make suggestions to help the licensing office address your complaint.

Sometimes the outcome of a complaint is to change a compliance agreement. Sometimes it involves a phone call to provide more information, the licensor setting up a time to visit, writing a letter, or all of these. If I see that some of the same policies are questioned, I’ll forward those to the licensing policy unit. These policies could

then be clarified or changed.

Other times the outcome of a complaint is to keep things as they are. There is very little I can do if the complaint is policy-related and I find the licensor has followed written policy and procedure. Complaints from providers already involved in the administrative hearing process due to a licensing action are left to the judges and attorneys.

Since December 2004, I’ve had over 80 phone calls from providers around the state. That doesn’t sound like a lot, but I make sure to invest the time it takes to investigate the unique circumstances around your complaint. While you’re always free to call, I strongly encourage you to work up the “chain of command” – first your licensor, then the local supervisor, then on to the Field Manager – before you call me. Many times problems can be solved before they reach Olympia.

Most of the calls I get are involve questions about licensing policy, complaints about how a licensing policy was applied, or complaints about how an employee behaved. Many times a complaint involves more than one of these things, or even all three. Sometimes calls involve a problem I’m not equipped to address. In that case, I’ll do my best to give you the information you need and refer you to the appropriate service.

Like our hardworking staff here at the Division of Child Care and Early Learning, you do a vital job. I look forward to continuing to work with you. Thanks.



Automated Fee System Implemented

DCCEL now has an automated billing system for license fees. Providers will now receive an invoice in the mail that looks like a bill when license renewal fees or annual fees are due.

"Once this 'bill' is received by providers, they should send their check along with the coupon inside back to DSHS in the enclosed envelope," said DCCEL Project Coordinator Susan Thomas. "This should make it more convenient for providers to keep their license fees current because they will have an immediate electronic posting of the payment."

Child care providers used to send their renewal and annual fees into their local DCCEL office, but providers will now get an invoice in the mail. "They should wait for this 'bill' before they send in any renewal or annual fees," said Thomas.

Providers will receive the invoice about 90 days before the fees are due. The invoice contains a blue return envelope and a coupon to enclose with a check. "In the past providers could pay for up to three years at a time, but they should now only pay one year at a time," Thomas said.

New providers (those not yet licensed) will continue to send their application fees directly to their DCCEL office along with their application for a license.

Questions About Your Child Care Business

Contact your Licensor or Licensing Supervisor with questions about the MLRs or with license renewal questions. Visit DCCEL online at <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/dccel/>

Contact your local Resource & Referral agency to learn about available child care provider training and technical assistance, by phone at 1-800-446-1114 or visit the statewide website at <http://www.childcarenet.org>.

We Will Continue to Mail The LINK This Year

We received a lot of feedback about the Link newsletter. When all the votes were counted, we saw that providers want us to continue to print and mail the Link.

For those that prefer to get the newsletter online, we will continue to post it on the DCCEL website. We'll send out a listserv announcement when it is online. See the next page for how to sign up for the listserv.

Join the DCCEL Listserv

The best way to keep up on what's going on at DCCEL and hear about the latest events is to join the DCCEL listserv.

It's easy to sign up. If you have an e-mail address, go to DCCEL's home page on the Internet and click the "DSHS Child Care News" link at the bottom of the home page. Then, enter your name and e-mail address and you're signed up.

We promise no spam – only relevant news and events that are of concern to child care providers, parents, and stakeholders.

To sign up, visit <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/dccel/>.

The LINK

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Deb Marley, *Assistant Secretary,
Economic Services Administration*
Rachael Langen, *Director,
DSHS Division of Child Care & Early Learning*
Bret Jensen, *Newsletter Coordinator*
Irenne Hopman, *Editor*
Publications Management, *Design*



Division of Child Care and Early Learning
P.O. Box 45480
Olympia, WA 98504-5480

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